

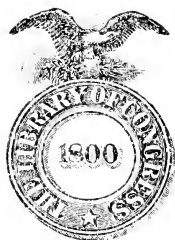
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THE MASQUE OF MORNING

THE MASQUE OF MORNING

AND OTHER POEMS

By

EDWARD VIETS



BOSTON

THE FOUR SEAS COMPANY

1921

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The Four Seas Press
Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

JUL -1 '21

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A WORD ABOUT PRODUCTION

The Masque is simpler than the pageant, and at the same time more dramatic. Simpler in that only a few persons are required, more dramatic in that language is used. Being simple, and generally short, as well as suited to outdoor presentation, it is still the ideal form of entertainment for groups who like intimate as well as artistic effects.

Either of the Masques in this book can be presented effectively by itself, but a better effect possibly might be obtained by combining the two Masques, (with the Interlude, NOON) as one. The Masques of MORNING, NOON and EVENING may then be considered to constitute a single Masque of DAY. In such case it is merely necessary to use some means for indicating the passing of time—to divide the act into scenes, so to speak.

For outdoor presentation all the scene requires is a small knoll or rise of ground to represent a hill. The side of the knoll facing the audience should be steep or even overhanging—a straight

drop of three or four feet would be ideal. The purpose of this is twofold: first to give a prominent footing for the boy DAWN, and second to provide a natural and obvious hiding place for the shadows which are surprised by DAWN, and later routed by him. Bushes or stones would also help here.

If presented indoors this effect could be easily obtained, and even better lighting effects could be produced, because sharper and quicker. In the matter of characters represented, a greater or smaller number of SHADOWS can be used than specified, according to the persons available. As many as a dozen could be used, or as few as two or three.

THE MASQUE OF MORNING

CHARACTERS

DAWN. *Should be a boy (or girl) not older than twelve. Dressed in yellow, wearing a wig of yellow curls, bareheaded and barefoot. Pink cheeks. Wings at the shoulders. In the right hand a bright round shield, in the left hand a gilt goblet. A horn at his belt.*

POET. *A young man, preferably. Tousled hair and wrinkled coat, for he has been sleeping in it. A book sticking out of his pocket.*

TRAMP. *A ragged, but fat vagabond, good natured and sottish.*

FIVE SHADOWS. *Boys or girls, five to eight years, dressed some in black, some in gray.*

THE MASQUE OF MORNING

Outdoors. A small, grassy knoll having a rather abrupt face. At the side of the knoll a POET and a TRAMP, lying on the grass asleep. Several SHADOWS in front, who have just paused in their gambols and taken attitudes of listening.

FIRST SHADOW

Hark, whose footsteps
Do I hear?

SECOND SHADOW

Is it Dawn
Approaching near?

THIRD SHADOW

Crouch and dwindle,
Skulk and hide;

FOURTH SHADOW

'Tis the hour
Of morningtide.

FIFTH SHADOW

Scurry under,
Lurk behind;

FIRST SHADOW

Dawn must not
Us shadows find.

SECOND SHADOW

Under rock
And under bush

THIRD SHADOW

Say no other
Word but, hush.

FOURTH SHADOW

Lips say hush
Lips say hush,

FIFTH SHADOW

Dawn must never
Find us. Hush!

*[The SHADOWS have retreated and are crouching
against the face of the knoll.*

*DAWN is hidden behind the knoll, but with each
of the first four words he speaks he rises fur-
ther into view over the brow of the knoll.]*

DAWN

Trip, trip, trip, trip,
And with a leap, I'm here;
All pink and gold, a minute old,
Hullo, awake, what cheer!

POET

[*Waking.*]

Why, here is Dawn.

TRAMP

[*Waking.*]

Yah, now we got to get up.

DAWN

Up, you sleepy mortals, up!
In my hand I hold a cup,
Filled with momentary dew;
Poets drink it, why not you?

POET

But I am a poet, wonderful boy.

DAWN

Drink, for these are magic drops,
Only found on high hill tops,
That from wild flowers I have shook
With my rosy toe—and took!

[13]

POET

[*Drinks.*]

Now am I drunk with lyric joy,
And could with thee, my darling boy,
Spurn lofty hills and leap wide vales,
And waken nymphs in bosky dales—

But tarry, tarry, whither away!

DAWN

Tarry? that I never can,
All too soon I'll be a man.
I must run a nimble race,
For the day doth come apace.

TRAMP

What! Do you have to work?

DAWN

If you watch me you will say,
I am busy as the day,
Chasing shadows behind trees,
Into hollows, over leas;
Waking all the sleepy-heads,
Rousing country lie-abeds.
But there's one I do not hear.
Where art thou, brave Chanticleer?

[*Rooster crows.*]

[14]

TRAMP

Oh, so many years ago I used to hear that sound.

DAWN

Hear the echoes flying wide,
Clatter o'er the country side
Waking hamlet, town and farm
With melodious alarm;
Waking Jack and rousing Ned
From their cosy attic bed.
Country smells are in the air,
Cow bells tinkle from afar;
Milkmaid whistles in the lane,
Horses neigh and neigh again,
Swallows twitter, cattle stir,
See, the farm house door's ajar!
He that still can stay in bed
Is the worst old sleepy head.

TRAMP

By golly, nefer have I in that way looked at the
matter before.

POET

Whither now my golden curls?

DAWN

To make rubies out of pearls.

POET

And then, marvelous boy?

DAWN

The town hall clock ten miles away
Must be painted ere 'tis day;
And then, to please the country people
I'll gild the tallest village steeple.
Run, you naughty shadows, hide,—
Farewell mortals, luck betide!

[DAWN *approaches to the edge of the knoll, the*
SHADOWS flee in every direction, then DAWN
leaps, and pursuing them, disappears.

TRAMP

Good bye, little feller.

POET

Must thou be off, dear boy? So youth doth fly
Ere it hath touched me twice; so happiness,
So love, so life itself, and every pleasure
Scarce greets me ere 'tis time to say farewell.
Speed thee, sweet lad, and gild a hundred steeples
While old men nod! Soon comes the searching
day

When brass and rust look through thy morning
gold,

And iron becomes the color of the world.

Would I might follow thee, aye, steeple high,

And no more footsore than thy radiant toe
Pricked by the tallest spire! Than Chanticleer
Himself with his full voice could scarce exclaim
My shrill and piercing syllable of joy!
But, here upon the earth my path is laid
Close to the heart of man; and for a space
Full sorrowful I walk, this way and that,
Searching for Truth, to find at last—my grave.

NOON
AN INTERLUDE

CHARACTERS

POET. *As before.*

NOON. *A middle-aged, bearded man, wearing a linen duster, and a farmer's straw hat.*

NOON

AN INTERLUDE

A pleasant meadow.

*POET is seated on the grass, reading a book, but
rises when NOON enters.*

POET

Who are you?

NOON

I am the boy that was, now grown to man.

POET

Are you the frolic lad that danced at dawn,
An inch above the brim of yonder hill?

NOON

I am high noon.

POET

Alack that babies must grow up,
And dawn turn into day;
But men grow old, and love turns cold,
So wags the world away.

NOON

When husbandmen sit down beside the grain,
And Jack and Rover lie beneath the tree;
When plowman wipes his brow and sighs amain,
And drinks his gingered water thirstily;
When bells do ring, and hired men sit round
To buttermilk, and beef, and lemonade,
When dogs with lolling tongues pant on the
ground,
And harvest hands pitch quoits beneath the
shade;
I come, serene and calm, majestic noon,
And with an even stride walk through these
lands;
I bring to parched fields a midday boon,
And for an hour I soothe hot labor's hands.
Cool shade, a darkened room, a tinkling glass,
And sounds of distant laughter as I pass.

POET

A benison go with thee, kindly noon,
And tread but lightly on the parched grass,
Now bruised by leathern heels. Farewell, fare-
well.

THE MASQUE OF EVENING

CHARACTERS

POET. *As before.*

TRAMP. *As before.*

GIRL.

EVENING. *A bent but venerable old man, with flowing white beard, and bareheaded. Wears cloak and carries a staff.*

THE MASQUE OF EVENING

A meadow crossed by a wall or a fence, with a gate. On one side of the gate stands the POET, on the other side the GIRL. Towards the front the TRAMP sits on the grass, nodding and snoring.

POET

While wise men sleep, may not two lovers kiss?

GIRL

But if they wake, Oh, then 'twill be amiss.

POET

Are not we wise to have such love as this!

GIRL

Then we should nod, while foolish lovers kiss.

POET

Then nod towards me, and I will nod towards
you.

GIRL

Oh, such a nod as that would never do.

POET

You speak quite bravely when the gate's between.

GIRL

'Tis not a high gate, that is plainly seen.

POET

Lead feet that should have wings, I'll seize thee
now.

GIRL

But if you seize too hard, I'll cry out "ouch".

[POET *leaps the gate.*]

POET

Your cries shall not be heard ten feet away.

GIRL

Rascal, thief, ruffian, mercy, sweetheart, pray!

TRAMP

[*In his sleep.*]

Help! Police! Murder!

[*Enter in the distance EVENING, toiling along.*]

GIRL

Look, someone is coming!

[26]

POET

An old man.

GIRL

Is he not old! And feeble!

POET

Can it be—

GIRL

Who?

POET

Can it be—Evening?

See how he toils along. His infirm step
Stumbles at pebbles, and his bending staff
Gropes for the path that grows increasing dark,
Shadows on either side. I'll speak to him.

[EVENING *draws near.*]

Sir, I do reverence you, and ask your name.

EVENING

I am evening.

POET

Are you the ruddy boy whose roguish smile
Brought dimpled light through all this dusky
vale?

EVENING

A boy I was, I trow—but I am old,
I scarce remember—merely know—I'm old.

[27]

GIRL

So it will be with me, and you, dear love!

POET

And you, and you, and you. Who shall escape!

EVENING

How strange this place! It was upon this hill
If memory still holds, I stood a boy
Poised on a pebble, whence I leaped ten miles
To yonder distant peak. Alack the day
These rusty hinges now do scarce avail
To bear me to my grave, laden with years.
'Tis twilight time; now yonder distant bell
Calls with a voice of bronze across the fields
Telling of labor done. Let drop the scythe,
The sickle and the fork; the sturdy plow
Lie where it falls, hid in the shadowy ground.
Let those whose legs are young dance through the
night

And at the husking bee kiss sweaty lovers.
Their steps shall be like velvet to my ears,
And all their mirth shall not invade my slumber,
Wrapped in the silent mold where no dreams are.

[*He reclines slowly.*]

Who that is old would not lie down with me,
And give his hard bones to the yielding moss.
The world fades, and the trees are sunk in mist;
The paths that late I trod are swallowed up,

And all the sounds of Earth grow indistinct—
The cries of children, the lament of love,
The voice of passion, the alarm of war,
The stir of men, the clash of hostile arms,
The shouts for help, the cries of frightened
 women,
Laughter and widows' woe, love, hate, fear,
 strife—

As though they sounded centuries ago
Come faintly on the ear—I heed them not.
I have no wish but only to lie here.
Twilight, a purple flower, its bloom unfold,
And when night comes—let it take—what it will.

GIRL

Dead!

POET

Asleep? Which?

GIRL

Who knows?

POET

He is gone, that once was youngest of the earth.
Farewell—I follow. The appointed hour
Will come when I who am both young and strong
And all on fire with love, will plod like him,
And on some destined plot will fling me down
Weary of earth, and these same lips shall say:

[29]

I have no wish but only to lie here;
And when night comes—let it take—what it will.

TRAMP
[*Waking.*]

What, is the old man dead?

POET
Aye, he is dead.

TRAMP
Oh woe, Oh woe. Ain't that too bad. Oh that's
pitiful.
It'll get me yet. It's terrible. I don't want to
die.

POET
Sir, by your leave, I saw this old man die,
And took much courage from it. If this be death,
To sink into the moss when we are done,
And draw the blanket of the leaves above us,
While blades of grass do whisper all around us,
And nodding violets tangle in our beards,
Then why dread death? Time with his graving
tool,
Wherewith he scars our high and stubborn fore-
heads,
Hath laid his blunted instrument aside
And with a soothing finger left this message:
These years have rolled above thy head, and now,
They leave soft silver on a serene brow.

SOME OLD FASHIONED LYRICS

HARK, HOW JUBILANT THE MORN

Hark, how jubilant the morn
Blows upon his yellow horn!

Hear, ye hills and valleys wide,
Hear, you far-flung countryside.

While the pale moon paler grows
And the day star fainter shows—

Waken to the lusty horn
Blown by jubilating morn!

FOUNTAIN OF REMEMBRANCE

Flow, flow, salt tears,
In hollow vale where sorrow stoops alone;
Till, dropping, dropping, through the patient
years,
Ye wear away the stone.

Come frost, come snow,
Come summer drought and wind and lashing
rain,
Still shall these faithful drops in cadence flow
Again, and yet again.

Majestic woe,
In meditative marble bend thy head,
From sculptured grief these drops again shall
flow,
Long years when thou art dead.

A WOODLAND IDYLL

When the brook was a fiddler
And fiddled of glee,
And the breeze, that old peddler,
Brought perfumes to me;
The mouse and the lion
Were married, I'm told,
While the guests drank red wine
From buttercups gold,

From cups tall and gold!

FALLEN PETALS

Red rose upon the bough,
Ah, you must pluck it now,
 For tomorrow its perfume is fled;
Beware, beware,
Thorns guard the fair,
 Perils protect each lovely head.

Come dew, come dropping dew,
Fall softly neath the yew,
 On the blossom whose glory is gone;
Unplucked, unwed,
Withered and dead,
 Poor petals that fall one by one!

IN APRIL TIME

When April's kirtle first is seen
And plashy footprint on the green,
 Hullo
 Let's follow
 Through field
 And hollow.

Who seeks for her and finds her not,
Hath read too much, too deeply thought,
 For see
 'Tis she,
 Agog
 With glee

Calling to those who tumble after,
Filling the woods with girlish laughter!
 Tomorrow
 For sorrow
 While April
 We follow!

SADNESS WITH A VEIL GOES BY

Sadness with a veil goes by,
Slow of step and deep of sigh,
Oh, me, Oh my,
A heavy sigh
That would wet an old crone's eye,
Seeing such a fair maid die.
Oh fe, Oh fi,
A deep-drawn sigh,
Draw it from a well hard by;
Hear the waters wash below,
Faint and slow,
Far below,
Yet some sorrows deeper go,
For an old crone told me so.
Oh me, Oh my,
The deepest sigh
Will be forgotten by and by;
The deepest well will yet go dry,—
So may the anguish
In thine eye.

LITTLE GOOD NIGHT

Good night, by candle light,
Under the bed clothes creep;
Silver and gold, so I've been told,
Aren't worth so much as sleep.

LOVE'S JAIL

In the donjon of my heart,
Slave and prisoner thou art.

Languish there.

And no other food shall eat
But the breath of kisses sweet;

Such thy fare.

In these arms enchained be,
While thy jailer watches thee;

Linger long.

Freedom wears a gaudy coat;
Captives sound a sweeter note;

Ends my song.

THE BROKEN VOW

So he pledged me his love
In a goblet of wine;
And by Jesus above
He swore to be mine.
But he wedded a lass
That lives down by the sea;
So alas and alas
For a lassie called me—

For a lassie called me.

THE NYMPH AND THE BROOK

First here, then there,
Then lightly through the air!
Oh, how hard it is to stop
Balanced on a pebble's top!
Then to stoop and lightly drink
Level with the water's brink.
Ouch, you chilly brook, let go;
Sprites and fairies have my toe.
My white skirts are not for you,
Nor my ankles bathed in dew.
If you let me not alone
I will seek some stepping stone,
And one finger I will shake
At the prattle that you make.

Boy that tries to be a man,
Come and catch me if you can!

DEPRESSION

The rain beating down, ever downward,
The earth with sad waters opprest;
A gray abyss that was skyward,
And a dull black ache in my breast.
Out there the grave of my comrade,
And the sound of the sod in my ear—
And my heart is the heart of yon storm cloud
That broods low o'er the sodden moor!

LOVE'S WOUND

Cupid, with thy golden quiver,
Boy that bends thy bow in glee;
Mischief maker, trouble giver,
Oh, hast thou let fly at me?
Why, ah, why
This leaden sigh,
When Corinthus is not nigh.

Crimsoned is the white goose feather,
That did guide thy nimble dart;
For thy twanging cord of leather
Hath clean driven through my heart.
Wounded I!
Oh, me, Oh my,
Of such wounds do young maids die?

HYMN TO PHOEBUS APOLLO

Out of the gates of morning,
 Into the vale of song,
Voices that come from heaven
 Carol in chorus strong:

Hail, hail, hail, hail!

Hail to the Sun's great glory,
 Hail to his robes of light,
There on the eastern mountain
 Stands he in splendor bright.

Fire from his hand he hurleth,
 Unto the farthest plain!
Wake all ye people rejoicing,
 Day has returned again!

Hail, hail, hail, hail,

Day has returned again!

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